April 9, 2024

TRANSCRIPTION

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: All right. So good afternoon. Good morning, rather, I'm sorry, and welcome to the Region III MAP Center *Community Alliances for Equity Virtual Coffeehouse* series. This *Coffeehouse* in particular is *Centering Rural School Communities*, and we are so excited that each of you could join us today.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, this is a space to virtually land as we work to create equitable learning environments to meet the needs of our students and families in the face of our current social and legislative climate. And it is our objective to use this opportunity to share our successes and challenges and strategies for meeting, meeting those challenges. We encourage all of us to come together in this virtual space, share our experiences, to use dialogue and conversation just as you would in just a, a relaxed local coffeehouse setting.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Before we get going with our conversation for today, I do want to go over just a, a quick, somewhat quick disclaimer. This is just part of our procedure as a federally funded Equity Center.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Right. So, the contents of this professional learning session were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal government should not be assumed.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: The contents of this session include activities…including activities are provided to individuals from school boards, state municipalities,

school districts, and other governmental units legally responsible for operating a public school or schools, or technical assistance and dissemination partners for professional development purposes. All sessions strive to maintain a safe, closed environment for candid conversations about equity-related issues. The thoughts, opinions, and practices shared or expressed during the session are that of the participant and not that of their employer, affiliated program, or host organization. Best practices are in place to ensure that session content, information, and identities of participants are shared only for their intended use. However, privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Participants in this virtual experience are from various states, some of which have two-party consent for video monitoring and recording meetings and calls. If the Center would like to record any aspect of this event, participants will be informed via the Zoom automated announcement. If this automated announcement is not made, the event is not being recorded by the MAP Center. To adhere to state laws of participants who reside in two-party consent states, individual participants are not allowed to personally video or audio record any aspect of this professional learning experience. To do so without full disclosure is a violation of state laws of participants who are participating in this event in a two-party consent state.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, this particular *Coffeehouse* will be recorded as part of our online, like, tools for our website and for our YouTube channel. And so, I am going to ensure that that is started now. Yep. So, we have that. If you did not see that, it should have popped up as a disclaimer. If anyone

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has any questions for that, you're welcome to put those into the chat and Robin will answer them directly.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center, that is who we are, is one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As the Region III Equity Assistance Center, we provide equity-centered technical assistance to state education agencies and public school districts in our 13-state region that you can see on the screen, in the areas of race, sex, religion, and national origin. That's just a little bit about our Center as a whole.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: I'm gonna give us a chance to learn a little bit more about the people who are in the room with us today so we can dive into the conversation we're all here to experience. So first I would like to introduce our MAP Center team, who is behind just designing this experience for you a little bit. I'll give each of them a chance to introduce themselves. I'll start with myself and I'm also going to briefly introduce Kristina Johnson-Yates, because she's not able to be with us today, but she was a big part of creating this experience and making sure that it is able to come together visually, aesthetically, behind the scenes, a lot of that heavy lifting.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: I am Na'imah Berhane. I am the Learning Networks Engagement Associate here at the Midwest & Plains Assistance Center. And what that means is I do a lot of work designing experiences like this one, for today's *Virtual Coffeehouse*. I'm gonna give a chance for Dr. Seena Skelton to introduce herself if she's…yep.

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Dr. Skelton: Good morning, everyone. So exciting to, to see you all here. If not on camera to see your name, to see that you're joining us into this space. I'm very excited about this dialogue that we're about to engage in around the, the importance of centering equity in our rural school communities. Again, I'm Seena Skelton. I'm a Director for the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center. And welcome.

Robin G. Jackson: My name is Robin, and I will be serving as your technical director today. I'm the Resource Development & Dissemination Specialist here at the Center. And what that means is I am likely the reason that you knew that this event was happening. You might have received communication from me saying, "Hey, come to this event." Also, as a technical director, what that means is if you're having any issues or…with Zoom or, or any questions today, you can feel free to private message me on the side.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you. And again, I'll be facilitating today's meeting. And what that means is I'll just be helping pass the microphone around the room because this is a group conversation. So, my role is that of ensuring that everyone has a chance to engage in the conversation. I'm going to let Robin walk us through a little bit about what today will look like.

Robin G. Jackson: Thank you, Na'imah. Before I get into this slide, if you are just now joining us, we're asking folks to change their name on Zoom to their first name and last initial. And the way that you do that is if you take your pointer and hover over your face on the screen, you should see three dots that pop up on the left side, upper left corner. You click on

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those three dots, and you should see the option to rename. Again, we would like your first name and last initial.

Robin G. Jackson: So, a note about participation. We're here for about an hour, so please make yourself comfortable and move about when needed and take any breaks when needed. For accessibility purpose, alt text is used on slide images. I don't think we'll be using breakout rooms today, but please, if you would like to join the conversation, you can drop your comments in the chat or feel free to unmute your microphone to join the conversation. But we do ask, to minimize noise in the background, that you mute your mic when you're not speaking. We use all sorts of Zoom and online tools during this event to engage in learning activities. And also, we will be taking a group photo. You do not have to be in that group photo. We'll signal you when it's time for that so you can feel free to come on camera if you'd like to be part of that group photo. Lastly, you should see at the bottom of your screen that captioning has been enabled.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you, Robin. OK. So again, today's topic is *Centering Rural Schools-- Communities in Equity Work*. Community members, classroom teachers, parents/caregivers all play a central role and professional role in continuous equity efforts in schools. And so, in this conversation, we're going to center the expertise of some scholars that work in the field of rural education. Please note that our conversations today will center those who have been historically and contemporarily marginalized, as that's our charge as an Equity Assistance Center. Please be ready to take notes and engage in the conversation as we discuss today.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, I would like to go ahead and introduce our conversation starters. So, for today's discussion, we have invited two distinguished scholars who have a broad range of experiences, and our conversations will…our conversation starters will respond to some prompts that we have that are designed to center the discourse around rural schools and rural education. So, each conversation starter will respond to the prompt, followed by an opportunity for the participants in the room to also contribute to the conversation. And I'm going to briefly introduce them and then give them a chance to introduce themselves.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So first, I would like to introduce Dr. Jesse Longhurst, who is an Associate Professor of Education and a Chair of Education at Southern Oregon University. Her research concerns schooling in rural, remote, and island contexts. She also writes about the complexity of defining rurality and recognizing diverse ruralities. Dr. Longhurst, would you like to go ahead and grab the microphone and say a little bit about yourself?

Dr. Longhurst: Thank you very much. I'm really delighted to be here and so honored to have been invited and excited to speak with you all. So, I work at Southern Oregon University and…where I work primarily in educator preparation, and my research really has to do with small and isolated schools, and how schooling is navigated in small places. I'm a rural person myself. I grew up off-grid in the mountains of Southern Oregon, so I'm still in my home place. And so the, the well-being of rural communities as vibrant and valid places is really important to me.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you. Next, I'd like to briefly introduce Dr. Flowers. Dr. Jamon Flowers is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Educational Administration and Policy Program at the University of Georgia. His research interests include educational policy, race and educational leadership, and rural educational administrational leadership. More specifically, Dr. Flowers' research focuses on understanding the intersectionality of race, educational leadership, and opportunity. Dr. Flowers, if you'd like to grab the microphone and introduce yourself just a little bit.

Dr. Flowers: Sure. Again, good morning to all. And I think my, my extension mirrors Dr. Longhurst as it relates to being from rural and operating in rural, from a little small rural town in North Carolina. And who would have ever thought that I would end up at the University of Georgia or earning a PhD. If you only knew my background and my story. But also, I really focus on how people experience rurality, and the role that rurality plays on those experiences. And what I mean by that is really looking at how school administrators, whether you are at the school base or the district level and, and how you operate in your leadership approaches.

Dr. Flowers: And one of the aspects, I should say, one of the strands that I try to explore more on is really how they create this college-going culture within their rural schools. And we will definitely talk a little bit more about that later on. But also, I'm excited. I really am excited here to talk about my research, but more importantly, how we can really change people's lives. You know, inform people on our research and give them a better quality and a better understanding. Because often

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times rural education is in the margins of literature and, and people have this deficient mind frame when it comes to rurality. And hopefully Dr. Longhurst and I, as well as you, can change that narrative as we really talk more about our topic for today. So, thank you.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: OK, so that is our conversation starters, just briefly introduced. Next, I'm going to help us walk through four discussion questions. And for those four discussion questions, I will start by giving the microphone to our conversation starters to hear a little bit of, from their perspective on the prompt. After that, I will hand the microphone to our participants to invite you guys to grab the microphone, or if you'd like to write into the chat, to contribute to the discussion. So, without further ado, our first question, I'm going to read it. Give us maybe about 10-20 seconds to just really let it settle in, and then I will hand the microphone to one of our conversation starters.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, "How do you conceptualize diversity within rural communities where there may be little to no racial diversity present, leading to a perception of homogeneity? How do you navigate this perception and foster an understanding of diversity within such contexts?" And I'm going to give us just about 10-15 seconds to kind of reread that a little bit and let that settle in. And Robin has put that question into the chat for us as well. Thank you, Robin. OK, so I'm going to start off with our conversation starters on this question. And either one of you can grab the microphone first to respond to this prompt.

Dr. Longhurst: Dr. Flowers, I think your, your grandfather wouldn't approve if, if you went first. So, Dr. Flowers mentioned earlier that as a Southern gentleman that he was…defer to me to go first. So, I will take that opportunity. Thank you so much.

Dr. Longhurst: So, I think there are a few things that really matter for me about this question. The first is that there is a persistent myth, even in academic and policy discourse, that rural somehow equals white. And that just isn't true. And it never has been true. And we really need to dismantle that myth because, well, for so many reasons, but one of which is that it really contributes to the idea somehow that nonwhite students, students of Color, are interlopers in rural schools. And that is absolutely, of course, not the case.

Dr. Longhurst: Another really important thing for me is that it entirely ignores Indigenous rural people and rurally-situated sovereign nations. So that imagined white version of rural America, it really leans on colonialist narratives that I'm uncomfortable with. So, I really, that's really important to me to, to lay out at the beginning. It's also important to remember that in much of the rural South, in the Southwest, not to mention places like Alaska and Hawaii, racial diversity is the norm, not the exception, and it has been for centuries. So that being said, there's also…immigration patterns impact rural communities and rural America, like the rest of the country, is increasing in racial diversity.

Dr. Longhurst: Rural is complex, and it's complex within and between rural communities. And so, it feels to me sometimes like there's an idea

that rural is, is homogeneous and urban is not. But if you look at a city like Portland, Oregon, which is fairly racially homogeneous and say, well, cities are then racially homogeneous. Portland is not LA, and Bonner County, Idaho is not Guadalupe County, New Mexico, right? There, there's really different ruralities, just as there are different urbaned cities. Is that the word in urban studies? Now that that being said, there are some rural areas that are quite homogeneous, and some are effectively segregated, just as some metropolitan neighborhoods are.

Dr. Longhurst: One of the differences is that so instead of it being a matter of city blocks between those segregated islands, we might be looking at dozens or hundreds of miles because of the, the space involved. So that's the first thing I'm concerned with.

Dr. Longhurst: The second, for me, it's, it's really important to attend to all of the ways that diversity manifests itself in rural places, which absolutely includes racial diversity, but it also includes income level, and class, and gender, and sexuality, and faith, ethnic heritage, and even the kind of community cultures that have grown up around heritage industries like agriculture, and timber, and fishing. There are cultural elements there.

Dr. Longhurst: And then the last piece, and then I will stop talking and let Dr. Flowers have, have a moment. I feel really strongly that rurality is itself a facet of diversity. Rurality is a part of the complex intersectional identities that rural folk have. And rurality is a lot of things. It's things that are rich and sustaining, and things that are

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challenging. So, I feel like those three pieces are kind of how I, I approach that question.

Dr. Flowers: I think just similarly, you know, you said it beautifully, some of my thoughts and things and, and just a couple things that I, I, I want to expound on. When I think about rurality, it is being and, and diversity. Let me just start with the word diversity, that concept diverse. It is more than just race. And when I think of rurality, there are so many complexities in there, similar to the urban and suburban areas.

Dr. Flowers: When you talk about socio-economic status, you talk about sexual orientation, you know, diversities. As well as, you know, I, I would even include in there the degrees of education. You know, often times, you know, rural is, is described as intellectual deserts. And that's not necessarily true because rural is not monolithic. It is so, so diverse in the types of individuals that live there, as well as the ideologies that people possess. I do love the idea that rural and rurality is also-- it should be included in your identity.

Dr. Flowers: One of the things that I have learned over the years, you know, when I…being a first-generation college student, I'm coming from a small rural town and I definitely, I felt like I was Jed Clampett off the Beverly Hillbillies…dating myself here. When I went to college, I had no idea what was going on, but my parents could not help me. But what I brought with me was some of the, the rural, I guess you would say characteristics, you know, family belonginess. How do you create that?

Dr. Flowers: The resourcefulness…and it was an identity that initially I tried to shed because of the negativity that came along with it. Even just the way I dressed. You know, here I am, this Black rural Southern guy that talked a little bit with a twang, that may not have had the opportunities—let's talk about the educational opportunities when we think about diversity, too, the educational degrees, where…and when I say that I may not have had all the AP courses, or the IB courses, or even some of the foreign languages. You know, I met people that were, you know, completed Latin 5 at my university and I was just excited to be in French 1 because we barely had that, you know. So, I, I think about diverse, it's like there's so many different things, but the power or the identity that comes along with it, I think it's very important.

Dr. Flowers: And that should be acknowledged when it comes to diverse because my rurality is not the same as Dr. Longhurst, or vice versa, and things like that. So those identities make a-- play a major role because it's different cultures. Because rurality, when you think about diversity, that it comes into play with culture. And often times I have to remind people culture doesn't equate to race. You know, there are different things, and within one ethnicity there are different cultures. So, all these, these different things. When I think about how I conceptualize the diversity piece in that, whether it's distance, whether it is the people, but I also look at the systems that's within rural communities. And when I think about that, whether it's educational systems, or let's say government systems, means of support, of how do they support, you know, individuals? And then, you know, again, getting back to self-identity.

Dr. Flowers: And the last thing, which was probably a little bit more on the equity piece, but I, I, I feel like, you know, if I can plug it in here. When I think about diversity, earlier I mentioned how, you know, rural is not monolithic, but also rural does not equate to racism or racist. However. However. There's always exceptions to the rules and you have to consider the ideologies that come along. Especially me being from the rural South. That is a whole different aspect, a whole different identity, or level or degree of diversity, versus Northern or Midwestern types of rurality.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you. And I see that we do have some contributions in the chat, which I'm happy to read for us. But I'm going to also invite our participants to grab the microphone if they would like to. And you can indicate if you would like in the chat, and I can read it, or you can hop on the mic. So first we have Sergio, would you like to step to the microphone?

Sergio Hernandez: Yeah, certainly. Hi, everybody. I'm, my name is Sergio. I am from Illinois, Illinois State Board of Education, the Equity Lead here. Yeah, I often think about how our media, right…and again, I'm a, I'm a city kid. I, I grew up so I, you know, in, in, in Chicago. And again, we have our, our very specific type of segregation. And I love how our, our, our panelists talked about, again, you know, where there's…segregation manifests itself, but the city is city blocks in rural areas, it's miles, right?

Sergio Hernandez: So, I think about migrant workers who again, because of industries that, that need workers, you see, you know, you know, these folks

come into rural communities and diversify, right? So, one of the things that I put in the chat, of course, is how, again, media that's dominated by urban culture, right? New York, you know, being our, our media as well as LA being these, these media capitals, right, that, you know, disseminates a culture across the United States and the globe about what American culture is.

Sergio Hernandez: And I think about how, you know, what role those, those entities play in regards to marginalizing the complex rural identities that are being chatted about here, right? And how we need, as urban folks, as folks in the North, to learn and unlearn some of our stereotypes that have been developed through media representation of, of, of rural identity.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you, Sergio. I also wanted to highlight one more comment we have in the chat. Mark said that I can go ahead and read that one for him and he'll hop on if he needs to clarify or anything. So, Mark says, "In my state, Wisconsin, we have roughly ten districts of over 425 who do not have any students of Color. It is actually an important…it is actually important to remember this since those students of Color are often even more marginalized in these primarily white spaces. It is critically important to see those students and understand their needs. And let's not forget how intersectionality comes into play for the students of Color, and really for any and all of our students." And Mark, if you want to, you can hop on to add to that.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: If any of our other participants want to come to the microphone to join this part of the conversation, I welcome you to use your microphone at this time.

Mark Schwingle: I will just add to my comment, which is this was surprising even to me when we started looking at the data across our state. So, I work for the state of Wisconsin and one of my colleagues actually was doing some research on this and found out this information. And I had a blind spot myself, because really, I was from rural community myself and I did not see this as being accurate, even though it is in fact accurate.

Mark Schwingle: But I think more importantly is when we think about some of the different ways in which our two presenters were talking about what is diversity, what is culture, I think that that's really, really important. And I think I need to continue to learn more about the different ways in which I'm, I'm seeing race as one, obviously, but there's so many other ways in which we should be thinking about what kind of diversity happens. So, I, I appreciate this conversation.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you.

Dr. Longhurst: Can I just piggyback on that for a second?

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Absolutely.

Dr. Longhurst: So, rural Oregon tends to be fairly white, though certainly not as much as folks may imagine. But one of the conversations that I often will hear in small districts is, "Well, we really don't have to worry about racism here because there's no diversity here." Which, you know, just sort of stops me in my tracks. But there is that like, "Well, we'll worry about that when it happens," kind of idea I think is…

certainly contributes to families of Color not feeling welcomed in a community. And then it also shuts down, as you said, Mark, any conversation about diversity outside of that really "binary" like "people of Color/white people" conversation. So yeah, I really appreciate your, your thoughts there.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: A lot of great conversation around what it means to be rural, what… how identity comes into play on that, which is a great segue into our second question. So, I would like to go ahead and read that question, give us a few moments to reflect and kind of take it in. Robin, if you're able to put that one to into the chat as well, that'd be awesome. And then again, I'll start with our conversation starters and then I will invite the participants to also join that conversation. And you can join the conversation through the chat, or we'd love to have you join on the microphone.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, question two: "How do you define equity in the context of rural schools, and what are the key factors that contribute to inequity in these settings? What steps can rural schools take to ensure equitable access to support and resources for marginalized student populations?" I'm going to figure out what's going on with my screen here. Those questions are in the chat and then our conversation starters: either of you is welcome to go first with those questions.

Dr. Longhurst: Dr. Flowers, can I invite you to go first this time?

Dr. Flowers: Absolutely, Dr. Longhurst. So, you know, I always, I'm not going to say I struggle with this when I think about equity because I, I, I try not

to use the word “access” because I also realize that access is another-- it can be another barrier for people because humans still control the access, you know. But when I think about equity, I think about opportunities for all and in the sense of quality, quality opportunities. And when I think about it as it relates to education, you know, when we think about equities as across the board, having people…the only word that comes to mind is having-- making sure that they have the access to certain things.

Dr. Flowers: And I think with, with COVID, it really highlighted-- shed light on the inequities that come across, or that with, are within rural areas, you know, where some people, especially in the urban areas, everybody just jumped on Zoom, everybody jumped on the internet and all this other stuff. But in rural communities across the nation, everybody didn't have it to the same degree.

Dr. Flowers: For example, my parents still don't have, you know, internet in their hometown because they're in the country. You know, there's nothing like going home and I and I still, you know, when I visit them, you know, there is a cow pasture crossing and all these other stuff. They are so far removed from any type of…or the nearest, the nearest city or town. So, when I think about equity as it relates to education and, again, I alluded to it before. And when we think about maybe, maybe prior to COVID, not having the access or the means to complete courses that some of their urban counterparts would have an opportunity to complete.

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Dr. Flowers: But now, even with technology and the growing…you know, I, I would be remiss to say that in rural communities, the opportunities for internet broad bandwidth and all that has not grown since COVID. That provides access toward more AP courses or will… access to different, different types of courses or programs that students may not once have been afforded, to that particular piece, but there's still a need. We still got to do a better job with that. And I think about when we think about…the other parts of what are the key factors that contribute to the inequities in these settings?

Dr. Flowers: Often times, what I'm discovering too, and using my hometown as an example, but also my research, sometimes it is the mentality within the community. You know, as people often times say, rural communities are not progressive enough. But it also depends. I think when you're talking to individuals who have always been used, lack of a better word, brain drain…as you know, sometimes we like to say, or just utilized in their research and not necessarily been poured into.

Dr. Flowers: So, there's a, there's a, a wall or barrier that comes up when we have non-rural people trying to come into these spaces to and, and, and let me say, put-- push forth that whole savior type of mentality. When we think about that, you know, no one wants to come in and think that they are all wrong. Everything they're doing is wrong or they're at a detriment and they need to be saved. So, I think about when we have these conversations around equity, I think it is beyond resources, but also the mentality. Being able to have conversations

that are sometimes against the norm. And people sometimes are, are…have that window up and that barrier up.

Dr. Flowers: Another part, and then I'll stop talking, Dr. Longhurst, because I'll continue to talk. When I think about it too, equity as it relates to education, one of the things that I'm finding in my research is also figuring out how to change the mentality, so they don't see equity or equitable opportunities as a detriment or the, the barrier or a weapon against the norm. You know, 'cause often times when they hear some of these quote/unquote, now that is highly publicized, the divisive terms they, they have, their red flags go up. There, there are blockades, blockades a, a way they think about certain things.

Dr. Flowers: So not only, I would say the materialistic things and the resources, but I think it goes back to some of the mentalities of individuals. Individuals who say they want change, but then when they actually have opportunities for change, they don't necessarily want that particular change because of the persuasion. Community members carry a lot of power in rural communities, you know. Well…where we have schools who are social frontiers, but do not be fooled and not think that community members don't have a say so in how that operates, because they really do.

Dr. Flowers: If you ever want to see how the power of a community, I would say, look in rural communities. When we think about equity, when we think about who has the positional power, or power period, to make these decisions. And I think that rural schools, rural education in general, have suffered when it comes to that because of some of the

nuances scare people, whether it's neoliberal type ideologies, or even when you're thinking about people not necessarily wanting to, to embrace different change because they don't see anything wrong. I think Dr. Longhurst talked a little bit about that.

Dr. Flowers: You know, “We're not going to really address this problem because it's not a problem until we need to address this problem, problem. So therefore, don't come with us with all these radical stuff. You know, you're creating a problem that doesn't exist for us.” So, when we think about equity, sometimes it, it hinders even the forward thinking. So, when we looking around corners, so we can't, you know, we don't create our own inequitable issues. Dr. Longhurst, I'm as…I'm going to turn this part of the service over to you, but I want you to add a little bit to it as well.

Dr. Longhurst: Thank you very much, Dr. Flowers. I absolutely echo everything that you said. There I was nodding furiously to myself and scribbling notes. So, there is inequity in rural schools just like there is everywhere else, right? It's…the same pressures and ugly histories apply in rural places that do in any other, any other place. There's sort of two levels that I, I think about this.

Dr. Longhurst: One is the equity within rural schools. Are there kids who are being better supported and having a better experience than others? Are there families who feel less welcome? Are there communities who don't see themselves represented in the staff at school? Are there patterns of disinvestment? When something awful happens, a

natural disaster, a pandemic for instance? Which children suffer more? Is…how is the school helping or not?

Dr. Longhurst: And that one advantage, one real blessing of a small school can be that students are less likely to get lost in the crowd. Individual attention is more, more possible. A school can wrap around a child and a family. The flip side of that is that it can be hard to get people in positions of power to recognize or acknowledge oppressive or discriminatory patterns in these small settings because they can-- there can be a feeling that each ugly instance is just a one-off right? "That was terrible. How awful for that family. But that's, that's not a pattern, right? And the things just don't happen in our tight knit community like that."

Dr. Longhurst: And there's a, a sometimes a, an unwillingness to recognize that a community can tightly knit itself into really unhealthy knots. So, there's, you know, everything has its, its dark side. So that closeness can sometimes be unhelpful. And then there's also the issue for me of the question of equity between rural schools and metropolitan schools. So, there's within the school, and then there's between types of schools.

Dr. Longhurst: Rural schools are often seriously under-resourced. Their cost structures are different. Out here in the West particularly, transportation costs can eat up a giant portion of a rural school budget that an urban school is just not experiencing. They have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers. Housing is an issue for

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teachers. Jobs for the partners of teachers may be a disincentive to, to teach in a community.

Dr. Longhurst: Very small schools, and not all rural schools are small, but the small ones have trouble staffing a variety of classes. Dr. Flowers talked about AP courses and advanced language courses, or hiring even specialists, special education teachers, that kind of thing. This disadvantages small schools, and wherever disadvantage exists, we know that it will be worse for the students who are already in marginalized populations. So that, that I, I think about that a lot. Rural…and I also feel like the solutions to rural school, the inequities between rural and metropolitan schools have to happen at the state and federal level. Those can't be solved on a local level. There have to be systemic solutions.

Dr. Longhurst: Rural schools need support from state and federal bodies to provide equity of access to special education, to transportation, all those elements that a good school requires. That kind of support can't just come from within a small community. It has to come with sufficient funding. So equitable rural education requires some political will. It requires a willingness by policymakers to take rural places seriously, and to not treat them as just backwaters that are dying a slow death, that rural communities deserve to be given this kind of sustaining support that is required.

Dr. Longhurst: And then lastly, Dr. Flowers, you brought this up, the, the question of the diversity, equity, inclusion becoming sort of a, a shocking phrase and the…sometimes school boards or parent groups being

weaponized against books, curricula, initiatives, which I would argue means they're being weaponized against children. And I think that when these outside actors, and some of them are…come from local small places, but a lot more it, it comes from the outside and then kind of infests it.

Dr. Longhurst: I think rural educators need to be really brave, and we need to have tough conversations with our neighbors. The…well, those phrases may have become controversial, right? Diversity, equity… The concepts of fairness and opportunity and decency really resonate in rural places. And rural communities…I don't know if it's a silly analogy, but we can be like siblings that fight amongst ourselves, but if we feel like somebody from the outside is coming after us, then we can be really powerfully protective of each other. The challenge is to make sure that all children and families are seen as worthy of that protection.

Dr. Longhurst: And that's, that's where the rubber meets the road, and that's where it's really hard and requires a lot of bravery. But I, I also want to say that that kind of intensity is not just a rural problem. That's an American problem right now. That's happening in suburbs, that's happening in cities, it's happening in wealthy communities, it's happening in poor communities. And rural communities aren't immune. But it also doesn't just live there. It's, it's happening everywhere. So.

Dr. Flowers: And Dr. Longhurst, if I can just add, because you triggered a thought too. When we think about equity and you, you brought up a point that

I immediately…and I wrote it down: the social capital sometimes that's absent within rural communities. And you know, when you…definitely agree with you that at, at state and federal levels and often times when you even try to move the needle, you know, you are met with, "Well, you know, thank you so much for, you know, sharing this. And, you know, we'll get to it."

Dr. Flowers: You know, having a little, little bit of experience at the U.S. Department of Education, I was always floored at the negligence when it came to rural communities and things like that. But getting back to the social capital, yes, we rural communities definitely can be powerful protectors. I love the way you describe that. And then also they don't necessarily have the social capital outside their communities that can afford them the platform or the spaces that…so their voices can be elevated, so their voices can be heard and you know, and, and things like that.

Dr. Flowers: I think that is important, too, when you look at metropolitan versus rural areas. Being a principal in large school districts and then metropolitan school districts, urban cities, and then being a principal in, in, in rural really shifted the way I thought about equity, diversity and things, and how I even operated and maneuvered…and how I even built the social capital. Because it's different. The, the communities and rural community, you know, are a little bit smaller if you would.

Dr. Flowers: And but then you look at the parents. Often times within my experience, those working in rural areas, those parents are more so,

you know, the furniture factory workers or factory workers and things like that, that may not have the connection to town council or city councilman, things like that.

Dr. Flowers: Versus when I was school and district administrator in large urban, you know, districts, it didn't take, you know, a parent, they didn't give a second thought for them to come to my door or send me an e-mail, letting them know who they knew if I didn't make the right decision and all this other stuff. Versus in a rural community, you know, often times, you know, it really depends on the family.

Dr. Flowers: Again, not trying to make a generalization here of how…their approach to school, and how they address, you know, the teachers as well as the administration's staff because they may not have the, the skill set or the, the knowledge of the capital in general in order to make those decisions or get them the help they need, versus those in the metropolitan area. Does that make sense, Dr. Longhurst, as well as others on that.

Dr. Longhurst: Absolutely, yeah.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you. I would like to invite participants to join in the chat or if you'd like to join the conversation on the microphone, I'm going to give us a few minutes. Feel free to just hop on, or put your thoughts into the chat.

Dr. Skelton: Hi, I have a question for both Dr. Flowers and Dr. Longhurst. Thank you both very much for your perspective and, and really sort of lifting

the assets and the… in rural communities that can be leveraged. So, can you talk a little bit more about just one or two…if you can isolate on one or two practical steps, or practical strategies, or actions, that an educator or community member or parent who are, who's a part of a rural school community, can do to leverage some of the assets like, like you talked about the, the, the tight knit community aspect of, of, of rural schools to advance educational equity?

Dr. Skelton: Understanding that they're sort of combating a lot of, sort of, negative messaging about equity that, that we're all receiving, right, across the country. But what, what would be…if you could isolate sort of one or two practical steps that someone can take to counter that messaging to, to leverage their, the, the asset of the-- a tight community to open up conversations around, around equity. And not, I'm not so much thinking about the use of the word equity, but more of the concept like you talked about that, you know, the word is one thing, but the concept, right? The, the, the equity, it is really trying to advance.

Dr. Longhurst: I can say that one of the things that I see in communities where the school feels like a healthy nexus of the community, right, is that the school is open to the community. So, there's, there was a great graphic making its way around a few years ago. There was the, the fortress school, right, where nobody's allowed in; the "come if we call you" school. And then the community school where people feel like the school is not just a place you drop off your children, but it's a community hub for lots of things. And that is naturally true in a lot of rural places. The athletic events may be the biggest event in the

community. Social services may be delivered at or through the school.

Dr. Longhurst: So, I think if a school really starts to think of itself, and school leadership is going to be…and district leadership is going to be vital in this, the school being more than just from 8:00 to 3:00 and at the football game. Like how are families welcomed really intentionally and invited in, and how is that space used as a community space? So, that's something that I see where a community feels like everybody's kids are everybody's concern.

Dr. Longhurst: The other thing that I would say, like you mentioned the, the words "equity, diversity, inclusion," I would say really thinking about drilling down into how do those match the values of a small community as it thinks of itself? Now obviously how we think of our community and how we behave are sometimes different things, right? But how does the community think of itself? If it thinks of itself as tight knit, and decent, and family-focused? Well, let's leverage that.

Dr. Longhurst: Let's talk about how our community takes care of each other, and taking care of each other means opportunity for all the kids, and help for the kids who are struggling in ways that not every kid is. And I think that sort of celebrating that idea of fairness and decency. And then also really publicly celebrating families. So, Dr. Flowers talked about social capital. In our communities, the timber industry has contracted drastically.

Dr. Longhurst: There's a lot of poverty in families that used to make a living wage in the timber industry. And those families…there's some identity stuff that's big there. So, how do we celebrate the good work those families are doing with their kids and for their kids and give them some social capital in the community? Invite them into the school, in school publications, highlights cool things that people in the community are doing. That stuff that I see, I'm sure Dr. Flowers has some other really good suggestions, but just thinking about my own context, the things that I've admired.

Dr. Flowers: Dr. Longhurst, you touched on some of the top ones that I was going to say, really capitalizing on opening your, your school and you, you, you said it. When we think about school-based as well as district-based administrators, I think there's a role that they have to play in order to change people's mind frames when it comes to building that collaboration between the parents or the families in schools.

Dr. Flowers: You know, we, we would throw around the little cliche, oh, “Let's build some partners,” and all this other stuff. But you know, it's almost like when we tell teachers and administrators that relationships are important, which they are, but then we don't teach them how to build those relationships with the families, with, you know, community members as well as with businesspeople. Because often times when we go to our, our businesspeople within, whether it's a rural area or urban area, we go there with our hands bent back, as lack of a better phrase with my grandmother would say, wanting something from them versus the reciprocity, the service-learning piece.

Dr. Flowers: So, I definitely think that coming from a, the, the school-based, the principal's viewpoint as well as superintendent's viewpoint is opening our schools, opening our doors to the community, and inviting parents in. And what that looks like, you know, and you set the parameters around that, but also encouraging parents to start the conversation with teachers as well as administrators, 'cause often times, you know, we, we get into this habit that we don't see parents until there's something bad that's coming up or, you know, the, that the principals are too busy or, you know, they don't have the time or the space in order to have these invited conversations.

Dr. Flowers: One of the most, and this is so simple. And I'm pretty sure anybody that has been in education for a while is like, "Wow, you know, Flowers, that was your big to-do." But when I was a, a school principal, at the question of my mentors, like, "What did you do when you was a principal in an urban city that you possibly could replicate in the rural community? How did you build that community? How did you pull parents in?"

Dr. Flowers: And I, it never dawned on me, but just a simple, you know, donuts and coffee. But what I did do is tap into one of the local dives and diners, and really asked them, "Hey, can we partner together," you know, and have this, this time frame where we invite our, our parents as well as our community members? And leveraging the faith-based community. You know, the CIA, Congregations in Action, was a huge asset for me when it came to working in rural communities because if nothing else…you know, we, we say, and I only can, you know, I'll

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use my family's experience. You know, they'll party all Saturday night long, but Sunday they're going to church back home.

Dr. Flowers: So that is, that is a commonality within rural communities that their faith, you know, churches or, or their place of worships, let me put it that way, because there, there there's a growing diverse, you know, group of religious affiliations within rural communities, tapping into those.

Dr. Flowers: And then the final thing I think…that I think is, is very important is that being in higher ed, one of the things that I realize is that we have to do a better job with informing our aspiring administrators, as well as teachers. Often times we prepare them specifically to work in urban settings versus rural settings. So, they operate, especially the newer educators, operate based off of what they have experienced as well as what they've been taught.

Dr. Flowers: So, I think it is very vital for us to include different scenarios because context matters in order…how you build a relationship with parents in the urban setting may—or in an urban setting—will, may be totally different from a rural setting. And often times that means you have to get out in the, the communities and being visible.

Dr. Flowers: You know, going to these apple festivals, it may and, and as I think people have talked about, even going to the football games. When there's only one high school in the community, you need to, as an educator, I think that being visible is very important. Hopefully that answers your question, Dr. Skelton.

Dr. Skelton: Yes. Yeah. Thank you both. Thank you.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Yeah, we have some contributions in the chat that I'm just going to read briefly. And you may notice that, like I said, there are four questions in this conversation. We may get through all four, we may not. Those conversa--, those, those questions really build on each other. And you'll notice that we've actually answered quite a bit of where we were headed because the conversation naturally drifts that way.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: But Peter says, "This is what community school…the community school's approach is all about. Still under-researched in rural spaces, which is typical." He has that in parentheses. "But we're starting to deeply examine this approach in rural context in Vermont. Collaborative leadership, leading with and centering authentic relationships, thinking creatively about expanded opportunities for students. All great places to start."

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: And Tammy chimed in on that, that, "I am a community school director in a rural area who struggles every day to get administrators to understand and own the strategy." And of course, you're welcome to grab microphone if you would like to add to that.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Rhonda says, "There is also the conversation about our immigrant families in rural communities and the culture that is the intersection of rural immigrants of Color. I was just in a conversation about making sure there is equity in place to access technology, and the trust factor."

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Sorry, I had something covering those comments. It was a little hard to read, but I have figured out how to get that out of the way. Let's see here. There are some resources going into the chat as well. And yeah. So, Robin says, "The community can see clear demarcation between themselves and the institutions around them." If anyone wants to add to what they put into the chat, or in general wants to add on the microphone, I welcome you to grab the microphone at this time.

Rhonda Talford Knight: Hi, this is Rhonda. And, you know, I just really want to, to hear from our experts on, you know, what does it mean to provide that access? And just, and, and when I think of access, you know, [inaudible] I heard what you said as far as making sure that access is, is equitable, right? That access sometimes is the barrier. But then how do we ensure like the education, because that's what it comes down to, right, of getting our communities and our rural communities the information that they need to have?

Rhonda Talford Knight: So, you know, as, as immigrants of Color, I guess I struggle with the fact that there's still yet another culture, and we still have to solve for that piece, that safety and trust issue. And so, I guess, you know, how do we make that happen and how do we support that? It's for both.

Dr. Longhurst: I think I would say again, we need to be loud advocates for those students at the state level. Because if we don't have the resources, or if the, the staff in our districts are not appropriately educated and trained about language acquisition, about cultural differences, about

the issues of legality around immigration and what that means for families, and if we don't have the support to offer those services appropriately, it's, it's going to manifest itself in a patchwork at best. So, that's the first piece for me is that we…that misconception that rural places don't have students of Color, that rural places don't have immigrant students. We have to be loud about that, and we have to demand the resources that we need.

Dr. Longhurst: And then on a school or district basis, I think you mentioned the relationships and the trust; that absolutely has to be at the center of everything. And if we don't have staff with longevity, if people rotate in and out of the positions that are the inter-- that interface with those communities, and if the people who are interfacing with those communities are never people who look or sound like those communities, then we're doing a disservice to those immigrant communities and to those children. So, I tend to, I tend to often be a systems person.

Dr. Longhurst: And if the system isn't working, none of the good work that humans try to do on the ground is going to be more than just pockets. In our community, we have lots of first- and second-generation families from South and Central America. Language concerns are growing because it's not just Spanish; it's lots of other languages now. And the communities that are handling that best are the ones that have made noise about support and gotten it from up-- above the district level.

Dr. Longhurst: And then they also have made a commitment to, “All kids are our kids.” And these are not interlopers. These are not kids that are just passing through. All kids are our kids. And that, but that's, you can't just say to a classroom teacher, “Believe that,” and that will be enough. There have to be resources behind it.

Dr. Flowers: I think the only thing that I, I will add, and I don't know if I'm adding, maybe just confirming that being a, a loud advocate and also knowing who your allies are. I think often times, you know, we may see district people or, you know, administrators as the, the, the victim, not the, the bad guys or bad ladies, what have you. But capitalizing on that leverage and also informing…going into the spaces where the, our, our, you know, our, our families are and informing them.

Dr. Flowers: You know, often times one of the things that I do see that's working well in some of our rural districts is one, them leaving the, the, their offices as well as their school buildings and going out into the community, but also open their doors for the, the community, but also the language that they use. You know, and some people say, “Well, they not being their true selves,” you know. Finding other ways to talk to them about how do we create a sense of belongingness for all students? You know, versus saying, “Hey, we, we gonna do this for a, a certain group of, of students.”

Dr. Flowers: Because I think, particularly in, in certain areas where the, the dominant race is white, when they, there's a fear that they will receive less and someone else will get more, then they, they shut

down on embracing, or opening their doors, or even giving things provisional tries and provisional thoughts. So, thinking about how you navigate that particular system in order for them…for their eyes to open. You know, even going back, I think I read in the, the, the chat box is like, you know, some people don't even believe that they have homelessness, you know, issues within their school.

Dr. Flowers: And you would be surprised how they define homelessness versus how the school define homelessness, and all these other…educating people about what this particularly means in this area. You know, I tell people all the time: based off of the school's definition of homelessness, for a while I would have been homeless because I lived with my grandmother, my mom lived with my grandmother, you know, versus having her own permanent address and things like that.

Dr. Flowers: But educating the parents on that, and providing hard copies, in addition to whatever, by any means necessary, getting that information in their hands so they can have a better understanding. Often times, you know, we hear about parent universities that really are a big deal in suburbia as well as urban areas, but what about parent universities within rural communities, opening doors for them and having conversations that on topics that they're interested in?

Dr. Flowers: You know, and then the, the final thing is when we think about training, you know, when we think about DEI trainings, like, “Oh my god, here we go, another training that's probably getting ready to bash white people, make them feel like they have done something

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wrong, or other ethnicities," and things like that. But also, being-- my point is being intentional about whatever professional learning opportunities that's out there that needs to be poured into, you know, the community and learning with, not for, the community.

Dr. Flowers: Invite the parents to sit beside you to learn with you around topics. I think when they, they, they do look…often times, and I fuss at my own family members about that, you are a collaborator with the education system. Gone are the days, at least in my opinion, that you know, you put all your trust into just let people do. But you have a spot, you have a purpose. You have information that not all educators have. So, you have to have that, you know, two-way communication to inform them about the child.

Dr. Flowers: You're not telling them what to do, but you're working with them in order for the child to get a quality education. Not just in academics, but the behavior pieces and all that. And I think once we look at the language that we use, but also look at our, our behavior when it comes to, you know, whatever, whether it's socioeconomic status, or, you know, a language difference or, you know, beyond the race differences, when we look at that, what is it that they have in common?

Dr. Flowers: Often times that, you know, as a principal, I learned quickly is that you know, they may not, the parents may not be mad at me. They're mad at the situation and all this other stuff. What is it that they really want for their child in order, you know, sometimes, you know, I have encountered, you know, the -isms that come along with my race or a

gender, and some things like that. But at the end of the day, what is it that they need? What is it that they desire that I possibly, as a school member/educator, can provide for them, and what they can provide for me?

Dr. Flowers: And it, it doesn't happen overnight because you are also dealing with some people who have some strong, deep, deep, deep ideologies that sometimes is against, you know, any type of equity or belongness, especially outside of their own circle. Or there's that lack of trust because they're there-- they have been betrayed before. Or they're more concerned about how people view them. So, yes.

Dr. Longhurst: I tell my, my new teachers that, who are often quite afraid of interactions with parents, particularly around questions of equity in, in rural Oregon. But I tell them that usually if a parent is cranky or unhappy with you, underneath everything they're saying, what they mean is, “I love my kid and I'm scared.” Underneath all of it, “I love my kid and I'm scared.” And if you can have the compassion for the other human that you're dealing with, then most interactions can be settled down. And I think we can-- need to think about that on a community level, too.

Dr. Longhurst: If families are disengaged from the school, they love their kids and they're scared. If families are knocking at the school door with complaints, they love their kids and they're scared, right? They…families need us to hold them gently and tenderly. And they also need us to be trustworthy. And that there is, there's a lot to that, obviously, but that feels like a, a core thing for me. And in rural

communities, mistrust shows up so fast. You can get away with it in a big suburban school longer. But if you start losing the trust of your community in a rural place, it happens, it can happen overnight. And so, it really matters.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: And I'm going to use that as a segue. So, we're talking about what those consequences are, what that can become. And I think I'm going to leave us with question three as our last question today. Question four, I'll, I'll just let us briefly take a look at it. Question four really goes to what we were speaking on before about what we can do and the things we can do with our community to create an education system that is fair and attuned to all students' needs.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, if you want to speak on this, as we talk about question three, definitely those they, they stack on each other and they build on each other very well. But the one that I'm going to go ahead and leave up on our screen for now is question three. Robin, if you could put question three and four into the chat for me so that people can kind of reflect on them both as we discuss. We have about ten minutes left in our designated time for today. So, I'm going to give us maybe about seven minutes to discuss this and then we'll move into some wrap up stuff.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: So, "What are the long-term implications of failing to address equity issues in rural schools, both for individual students and for the broader community?" And as we're considering that, we can also think about how collaborative efforts with those local constituents impact creating that equitable education system.

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Dr. Flowers: Dr. Longhurst, I, I'll jump in with your permission. You know, that Southern piece. Real quickly, I think the long-term implications of failing to address this is that the issues that we're facing now. So, for example, rural students graduate high school at a higher percentage than their urban peers, but they do not go on to college at the same degree or at the same percentage. So, when we think about equity, understanding "why." Why do they stop at the high school piece or the, the, the, the graduation, high school graduation piece, and not pursue anything further? Is it because of the lack, and when I say lack of resources, lack of quality education, in their opinion, and things like that.

Dr. Flowers: So, when we think about that, I, I, I, it goes back to systems, you know, starting with the federal and state levels. What are the policies that are in place that can support a more college-going culture or climate within rural communities? You know, everything…I think we are saturated, and there's so much more to discover, so, don't misinterpret me. We're saturated with so much coming from an urban perspective when it comes to these equities and diverse issues and things like that, that again, rural has been pushed to this aside. Therefore, we are still discovering, and trying to understand rurality and its completeness, you know, which again goes back to implication that we haven't addressed equity issues, or we just really haven't addressed rural education period when it comes to that.

Dr. Flowers: The second thing that I would say is a long-term implication is fighting against mentalities. And when I say mentalities: negative, divergent mentality…and divergent is not necessarily always a

negative piece, but let's say a toxic divergent type of mentality. You know, fighting against those. And those are again, long and deep rooted within families, intergenerations, and in all the generation after generation, what have you, when you are trying to promote progress with individual students.

Dr. Flowers: I cannot tell you how many times, you know, I had to have some great and crucial conversations with parents, even just about their child completing a, a higher-level course, or reading a certain book, you know. Or getting past trying to--at least attempting--trying to get past my race in order to see the good that I, you know, I'm trying to have for your child. You're letting your, your racism block a blessing or how we can both work together for your child. I think those are certain things that, you know, we continue to fight. Based off of again, especially in the, the rural South when we come…when it comes to the equity issues. And that students are sometimes not…that they don't have the opportunities because of their parents' negativity, whenever their mentality, or the community's negativity…mentality when it comes to progress. So, I'll, I'll pause there. Dr. Longhurst.

Dr. Longhurst: Thank you. I, I really am, am hearing a lot in what you're saying that is, that I see resonating in, in our own communities in very different contexts, right. One of the biggest tensions in rural education, and Dr. Flowers, you've probably read and written as much about this as I have, is what is school for in a rural community? Is it to support the individual achievement of each child to "get out," right? Even if it means our best and brightest--however, we problematically define

that, right? If they leave the community and never come back, have we done our job as a rural school? Cool. We've gotten them to college. A few of them, the chosen few, the ones who deserve to go, right, they're out. We got to get you out of this community.

Dr. Longhurst: What, what does that do to a community? And what does that mean for the people who want to live a rural life in that community as adults? But so, if you know, are we a talent extraction industry? Craig Howley called it a school's a talent extraction industry for rural communities. But if we think, "OK, what about the long-term vitality of this rural community?" And, "What if these children want to grow up to live rural lives near their families?" Is that the role of a rural school? Well, what if none of the local industries pay a living wage? What if there isn't a university or higher ed institution within a day's drive? What if the resource extraction economy is shrinking? How do we make sense of that? How do we square that circle? And we need community stakeholders to help us answer those questions.

Dr. Longhurst: If the school thinks it has the solution and hasn't asked anybody else, then that's a big problem for me, whichever direction you go. And I think it's a false binary, right? I don't think we get kids out of rural communities, or we hold them tight. I think that we have to offer a, a variety of adult lives as visions for kids. And that means lots of access to lots of opportunities. And unfortunately, that's often what doesn't happen.

Dr. Longhurst: We see sort of a, "You were going to get out of this town; you'll probably stay." And that's bifurcates our communities into haves and

have nots and stratifies communities into the people who employ low wage labor. And that, that's not a healthy way to have a community in the long run.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you. We've had a lot of really robust conversation today. And as always, it always feels like we're running out of time to get to everything we'd like to discuss because these are really important and really meaningful conversations.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Just, just in the last couple minutes here, I want to share just some resources. I know there were so many resources going into the chat. So, if you haven't got a chance to maybe save those links, this might be a great time to do that. But our Center's Virtual Library houses a lot of resources that speak to the communities that we serve. And so, this, this event was about rural schools. And we wanted to highlight one such resource here on *LGBTQ+ Youth in Rural Schools and Communities.* In this *Equity Design* brief, we review research regarding LGBTQ+ youth and youth schools and rural context in North America, primarily in the United States, the issues and concerns they face in schools and their communities, how they are affected by these issues, and what schools are doing to support rural LGBTQ+ youth.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: If you do social media, we would love to have you take a minute to follow us or to like us on social media. We have Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn there, and we're gonna put those links into the chat for you as well. There are a lot of resources that we update daily with systemic partnerships, upcoming events and etcetera.

Dr. Flowers: Thank you.

Dr. Longhurst: Thank you so much for having me in the conversation.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you.

Dr. Skelton: Wonderful conversation. Thank you so much, Dr. Flowers and Dr. Longhurst. It's really, really delightful and wonderful conversation. Very informative, learned a lot.

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